

A zine for men about
rape, consent, and how
to not be a dick.

**NEW AND
IMPROVED!!**

NOW FEATURING:-

- ★ More sex positivity!
- ★ More cock love!
- ★ Better analysis!
- ★ More genderqueer!
- ★ Fold-out consent
comic!!

DON'T BE A DICK!

©•Revised Edition•©

PAY NO MORE
THAN \$3!

First run of 100, pink covers, Dec. '13
Second run of 100, blue covers, June '14
Third run of 100, green covers, Oct. '14
Fourth run of 100, yellow covers, Feb. '15

Things I forgot:

- * INCITE! / Critical Resistance
Statement on Gender Violence and
the Prison Industrial Complex -
Visionary & essential *
- * mambo2.com - Tracks & marks
the "Men's Rights" movement and
other assorted misogynists.
* Now we hunted the Mammoth.com fix
- * Playing the Whore by Melissa Gira Grant -
Excellent book about sex work
politics that dismantles pervasive &
harmful myths. Essential.
- * Redefining Realness by Janet Mock -
Powerful memoir about Janet
growing up & finding herself as a
young trans woman of color.
- * I believe you it's not your fault, tumblr.com
Stories of violence & survival.
Intense & powerful.
- * Mysterious Skin - Absolutely brutal
film about child sexual abuse, trauma,
sex work, and rape that follows
two small-town boys from childhood
to young adulthood. Major trigger
warnings for this one.

DON'T BE A DICK

by P. Brown

Revised edition, November 2013

email me! kozenchuk@gmail.com I also wrote a zine about
the year I spent teaching in a jail called Eleven Months.

Mega thanx to everyone who gave feedback on this version of the zine!
It's way better because of your thoughts and what faults remain are
mine alone. Hugs to: Ashley, the Seams, Cait, Eli, and Gabe.

anti-copyright:

please copy and/or distribute to anyone you think might appreciate
this zine.

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Read the article "Bosom Buddies: A Photo History of Male Affection"

Zines:

- *Learning Good Consent* – The best zine I've read about consent! Go get it, but not from Microcosm, since Joe Biel is a scumbag. Learn more on the internet.
- *Support* – Great zine about supporting survivors of rape and abuse.
- *Brainscan* #21 – Powerful story about emotional abuse.
- *Entropy* by Peregrine – Zine about healing from childhood abuse.
- *Breaking the MANacles* – This zine is targeted towards activists, but is relevant to everyone.
- *Pink and Black Attack* – Any issue! Queer anarchist zine.
- *Burning Women* – Zine about witch hunts and the rise of capitalism.
- *make/shift*– Semiannual feminist magazine – amazing writing.

Introduction:

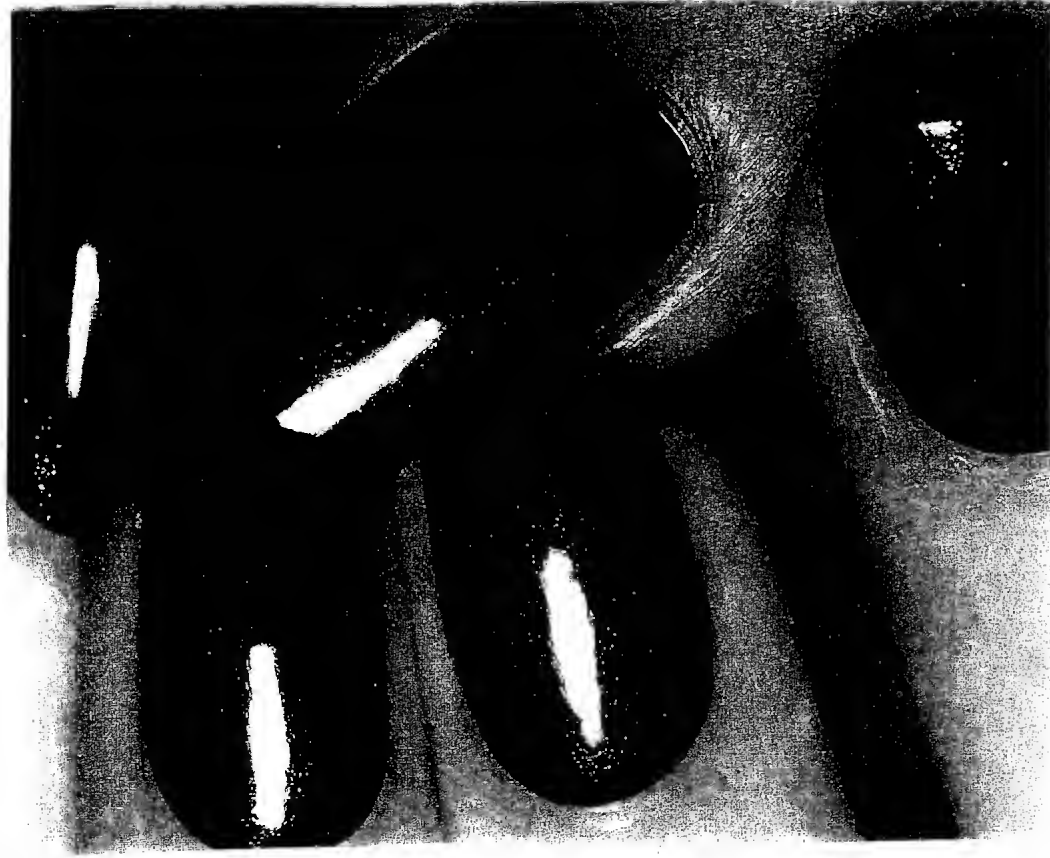
I want to acknowledge that it can be scary to pick up a zine like this, so welcome to the second edition of *Don't Be A Dick*. It's good to have you here. I wrote this zine as an introduction about rape/sexism for straight, cisgender* men a few years ago, and it's time for an upgrade. At the time, I was thinking about what it meant for me to be white and male in a racist, sexist society. I'd read a few zines for men about sexism and consent, but none of them satisfied me, so I wrote the zine that I wanted to read. I was thinking a lot about my relationship with pornography, rape culture, and my practice of consent – more accurately, my lack of consent practices. This zine will cover all those bases, plus some more.

Trigger warning! There are descriptions of sexual violence, racism, and entitled behavior throughout this zine. This may be upsetting for you, especially if you are a survivor of abuse, assault, or rape. Please take care of yourself.

Very few of the ideas in this zine are mine – most come from the books, conversations with friends, blogs, and so on. I would not be writing this zine if feminists hadn't been challenging male supremacy for centuries, if the queer/trans liberation movement wasn't kicking ass, without movements for racial justice and decolonization, and without the compassion, support, and tough love that people have shown me in my journey. Thanks everyone.

*If you are cisgender (sometimes shortened to "cis"), that means you identify with the gender you were assigned at birth. This is different from transgender, which means you identify with a gender different from the one you were assigned at birth. For example, a baby is born, and because this baby has external genitalia, he is assigned the male gender. Later in life, that person may decide that she is a woman or some other gender. If that is the case, I would describe that person as trans.

Hopefully this zine makes you think, *fec!*, and actually change some things in your life, whether that's the jokes you tell, how much you open up to the men in your life, your relationship with your female relatives, or anything else. Check out the reading list at the end of the zine and please get in touch if you have thoughts, questions, appreciations, or critiques. I'd love to hear from you!



Websites:

- Scarleteen - Definitely an introductory site, but I learn something new every time I'm on here.
- Good Men Project - lots of wonderful articles on here!
- coloursofresistance.org - Lots of good anti-racist articles. Check this out if you're white, especially pieces by Chris Crass.
- phillyspissed.luct - lots of great zines to download
- The Northwest Network - Resources for Bi, Trans, Lesbian and Gay survivors of abuse - great analysis around partner violence in the queer community. They have trainings if you're in the Seattle area.
- projectunbreakable.tumblr.com - Survivor-centered healing art project, very powerful.
- Tits and Sass - Amazing blog by and for sex workers. Wide-ranging and deep analysis that has taught me a lot.
- "Why Misogynists Make Great Informants" - a great article about how rapists hurt movements for justice.
- eminiism.org - Lots of sharp thinking and writing about sex work and youth.
- "10 Tips on How To Be A (Feminist) Ally to Sex Workers" - Just like the title sez. Read it!
- The Current Conscience - Good critiques and lessons but often not relevant for trans folks.
- bornwhore.com - Tough love from a sex worker.
- "Under Duress: Agency, Power and Consent" [in two parts] - great piece that deconstructs different models of consent and their limitations. Powerful and complex.

Resources:

Just because I listed something here doesn't mean it's perfect or that I endorse everything the author has ever written/done, or even everything that is in that book or on that site. I got something important out of each resource I listed and think they are relevant to lots of folks, that's why they're here. Take what you need and challenge yourself.

Books:

- *On The Road To Healing: An Anthology For Men Ending Sexism*
- *The Color of Violence* - Anthology by INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence. Essential.
- *Yes Means Yes: Visions of Female Sexual Power and A World Without Rape*
- *Why Does He Do That?* - Lundy explains the why and how of abusive men - intense and incisive.
- *Transforming a Rape Culture* edited by Buchwald, Fletcher, Roth - get the revised edition published in 2004.
- *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*
- *The Revolution Starts At Home: Confronting Intimate Violence Within Activist Communities*
- *That's Revolting!* - Fabulous anthology about queer resistance to capitalism, the AIDS crisis, etc.
- *Doris* - Check out either anthology. Lots about being a punk, surviving abuse, etc.
- *Whipping Girl* by Julia Serrano - About sexism and trans-misogyny.
- *My Gender Workbook* by Kate Bornstein - Good tool for self-examination around gender.
- *Paying For It* by Chester Brown - Graphic novel account of Brown's experiences paying for sex.
- *Sex At Dawn* by Ryan and Jethá - Looks at the evolution of human sexuality. Changed my mind about a lot of things.
- *The Will to Change* by bell hooks - Compassionate book about men and sexism.
- *Lusty Lady* by Langely - Memoir about working at the legendary peep show in Seattle.

A True Story:

A few years ago, when I first started reading zines about consent, I realized that I had crossed women's boundaries in previous relationships. For example, I pressured a former girlfriend into giving me a hand job. I repeatedly told her how much I wanted it while adding the meaningless qualifier "it's okay if you don't want to do it," while my tone of voice and body language said otherwise. Add in the social pressure that women have to take care of others' needs before their own, and you had an environment of coercion, not of consent. After I came, she told me how horrible it was, and I apologized, not understanding what I had just done.

It was two or three years later - after I had gotten into feminism, started to read about consent, and worked on becoming more empathetic - when I started to think about how she had experienced that night. We are on good terms, so I apologized to her, we talked about it, and she gave me permission to share this story. (It's her story, not mine.) One important thing I take away from this is that had I not taken the effort to educate myself about consent, I would still not understand what I had done. That is a clear example of how being socialized as male has encouraged me not to think about how my actions affect others. I also want to emphasize that my apology didn't make things "okay." I fucked up and I can't take it back. This realization made me realize that I needed to change my behavior. I added new consent practices (more on those later) and started disclosing how I had been coercive in the past when I began seeing someone new. And I continue to educate myself about sexism, rape, and how my gender socialization guides my actions and affects my relationships.

What is Rape?

Rape is one way to speak about non-consensual sex. Different people mean different things when they use the word rape. Legal definitions are often the narrowest and revolve around forced penetration. Some feminists define all acts of non-consensual sex as rape. Sometimes people use the term "sexual assault" instead of rape. Often, the survivor will define an act as rape, whereas the person who violated them would not. The word rape may not fit every act of non-consensual sex, but the word is powerful and holds truth for many survivors. Survivors get to define their own experiences because it gives them some control over what happened and that can be an important part of healing.

Sexual violence falls on a spectrum, ranging from violently non-consensual sex to coercion, using date rape drugs/alcohol to make someone unconscious before sex, to simply failing to make sure that the other person wants to have sex with you. What all these actions have in common is that they are done without the full consent of the other person. Whatever you want to call a specific act of violence, it hurts people and it's wrong.

You do not need to intentionally ignore someone's refusal of sex, or drug someone, or use violence to commit rape. Regardless of your intent, you can have a negative impact. A study by *Ms. Magazine* found that 88% of men who had committed an assault that met the legal definition of rape were adamant that they had not committed rape. This type of self-distancing allows one to think "I'm not a rapist," while continuing to commit assaults with a "clean conscience" and not think about how their actions are impacting others.

If you have crossed someone's boundaries or raped someone, that does not make you a bad person. It *does* mean that you have done something wrong. If you have hurt someone, you need to understand the gravity of that. It's okay to have strong feelings during conversations about rape, but it's not okay shut down those conversations, and it is profoundly disrespectful to minimize the harm

Consent is a relational process that can be revoked at any time. If someone said they want to have sex, they can change their mind whenever they want and you must respect that.

Consent is sexy! Some think that consent takes away from the spontaneity and excitement of sex. I don't get that argument, so I think about it this way: when two people trust each other, are willing to share their deepest desires, and feel safe enough to shed their inhibitions, how could the sex be anything but great?

It's especially important for people who were socialized as men to learn about consent because we are the ones who have been trained to be sexually aggressive, to take what we want. This was illustrated for me when I started thinking about my own boundaries. What would it be like if I had to fend off the advances of a woman? The idea is so foreign to me I can hardly comprehend it - aren't I supposed to be willing to go as far as I can with any woman I find sufficiently attractive? That's a message I get often, but it's not true. And that brings up my final point: everyone needs to work on all aspects of consent. That includes figuring out your own boundaries, respecting others, taking respectful sexual initiative (or giving room for others to do so), asking questions, and so on. I think that some people need to work on some aspects more than others, but everyone has a critical role in establishing consent in relationships.

Consent also has a role in platonic relationships and friendships - it's not just for lovers or lick buddies! It can feel uncomfortable to discuss physicality with friends, but it can be important in creating a safe space for others. It's very likely that some of your friends are survivors of rape or abuse, and may be triggered by hugs or other types of touching that others would find innocuous. I continue to work on checking in with friends to make sure that I'm not doing anything that they don't like, co-creating a foundation of trust and respect that we can build on.

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True consent is the presence of yes, not the absence of no. This kind of consent is important because saying no can be very difficult, especially for women, who are socialized to give in to men's demands. A yes spoken with trust and good communication means so much more than a yes that is spoken under pressure. Opening up yourself to rejection is scary, because no becomes a very real possibility, but every yes is affirming and validating. Good things can also come out of no as well – people can have a lot of good reasons to say no that aren't related to the person they're in the relationship with, like not being on birth control, not feeling good, past trauma, health stuff, inexperience, etc. Being able to discuss "no" shows that the relationship is in a healthy place – if either partner doesn't feel comfortable saying no, you shouldn't have sex. Sex is not the only, most important, or highest form of intimacy and connection.

If sex involves force, pressure, or coercion, it isn't consensual. It may not be rape, legally or otherwise, but it isn't consensual. Coercion is whenever someone making a decision feels pressure or limitations on the choices they make. Coercion can be as extreme as a gun pointed at your head or as subtle as a lifetime of hearing that you should take care of others before taking care of yourself. Instead of trying to avoid rape, I think it is more effective to strive for consensual sexual interactions. If you focus on the process of positive consent instead of "scoring," you are much less likely to cross someone's boundaries and harm them.

Often, people talk about heterosexual sex in terms of the man "rounding the bases," doing everything he can to get to "home base." This way of thinking about sex is unbalanced and also makes it easy to lose sight of what is important about sex: connecting with another person. An alternative analogy that I like is ordering a pizza together. You can decide what toppings you want to get (broccoli? anchovies, but only on one third of the pizza?), how fast to eat the pizza, etc. Maybe one of you doesn't even want pizza! Then you shouldn't order it.

you caused to try to feel better about yourself. Accept the impact of your actions and see if there are ways you can make reparations with the person you hurt, as well as changing your behavior so you do not violate others' boundaries in the future.

Rape is a denial of agency and autonomy to whoever is being assaulted. Rape is not sex. Rape is often an act of oppression and domination. Rapists frequently use rape to "put women in their place," that is, subordinate to men, and explicitly speak of rape in such terms. An example of this is the huge amount of rape threats that the feminist writer Lindy West received after speaking out against rape "jokes" in the comedy scene.

Rape is not rare. Sexual violence is not unusual. This is the world in which we live. The majority of us have harmed someone else and/or survived harm that was done to us. These experiences don't mean we are fundamentally broken or dysfunctional or wrong. These experiences are the result of living in a culture that has not taught us how to connect with each other in healthy and respectful ways. It hasn't always been like this. And if we work together to transform the way we live and interact, one day it will no longer be like this.

-The vast majority, around 99%, of rapes are committed by men -

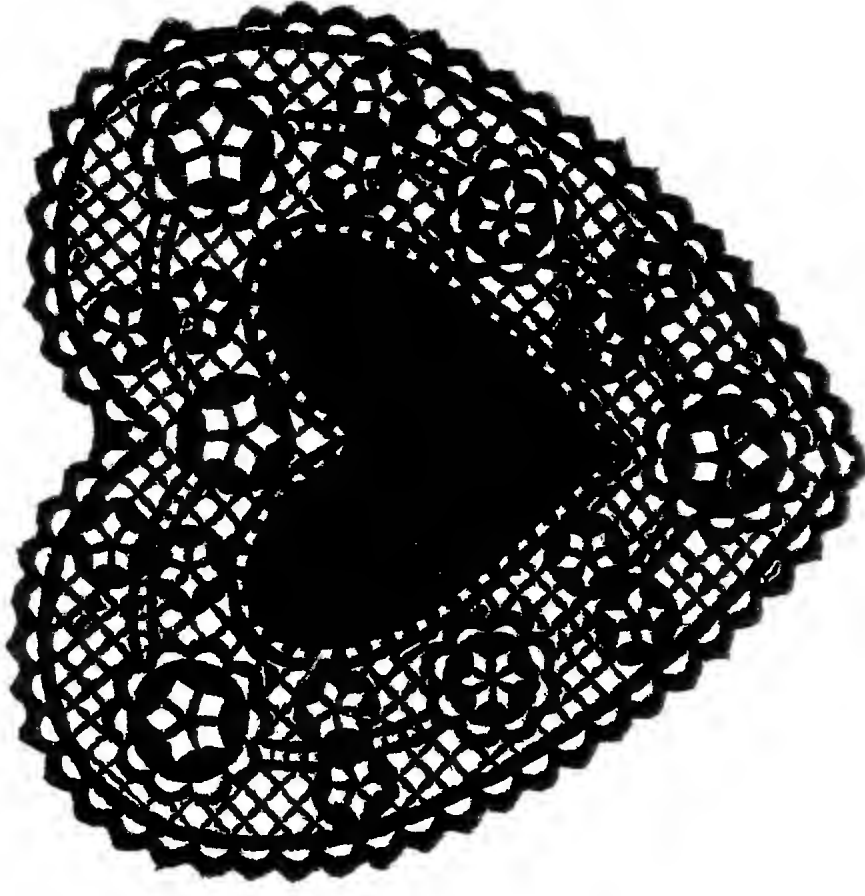
It's important to recognize that anyone can be raped. Different people are raped for different reasons, and it affects different people in different ways. For example, female slaves from Africa were raped both by slave masters and other slaves for the purpose of producing more slaves. Sex workers, especially trans women, are frequently raped by police. Women of color are often targeted for rape based on racist assumptions, i.e. that Black women are sexually animalistic or that women of Asian descent are seductresses. Queer women are targeted for rape by entitled cis-men who can't stand the idea that women can find sexual pleasure without them. Gay and femme cis-

men are raped for transgressing masculine gender roles. Children are abused or molested by their parents or other adults. Disabled people are abused by their caregivers or family members, as children, youth, and adults. Rape is almost always the act of one who is in power in a given relationship. Rape is also a tool of governments and institutions – it has been used in warfare for centuries, as well as a tool to pacify uprisings, repress movements for justice, and to terrorize immigrants, people of color, and other marginalized communities.

One reason that rape often goes unreported or undisclosed is that many people hesitate to define sexual violence as rape. The legal definition of rape varies, but often centers around forced sexual penetration. Other types of sexual violence can be just as, if not more, destructive. For example, if a previous relationship exists between the survivor and the person who hurt them, it is less likely to be labeled as rape. But the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network reports that 73% of rapes are committed by an acquaintance, not a stranger. For some groups, like college age women, the percentage is even higher.

Rape often happens in abusive relationships. This is the definition of abuse that makes the most sense to me: "Abuse is a pattern of behavior where one person tries to control the thoughts, beliefs, choices, or actions of a lover, friend, or any other person close to them. It can include physical, emotional, sexual, spiritual, and/or economic abuse & exploitation." [from the Northwest Network]

"... emotional abuse is any nonphysical behavior or attitude that is designed to control, intimidate, subjugate, demean, punish, or isolate another person. But there are also some types of physical behavior that can be considered emotional abuse. These behaviors have a name: symbolic violence. This includes intimidating behavior such as slamming doors, kicking a wall, throwing dishes, furniture, or other objects, driving recklessly while the victim is in the car, and destroying or threatening to destroy objects the victim values." - Beverly Engel, *The Emotionally Abusive Relationship: How to Stop Being Abused and How to Stop Abusing*



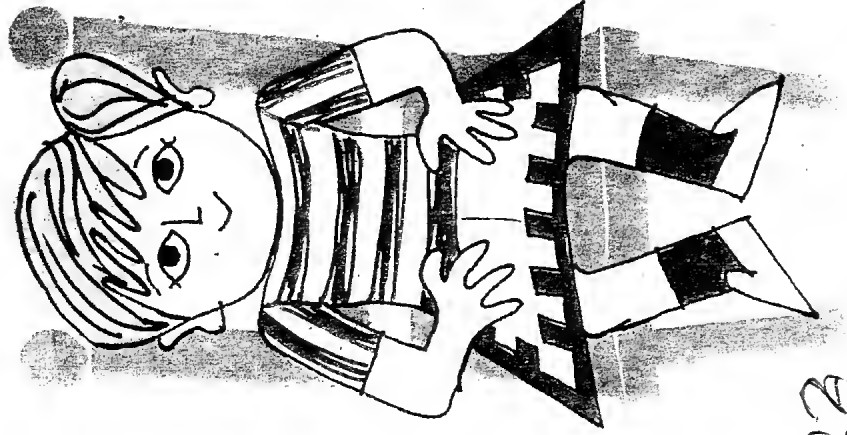
Let's Talk About Consent, Baby:

"This is the most important section of the zine. That's because by learning about consent, I have been provided with a positive relationship model and I can see more clearly what has been missing from my life so far and hasn't been provided by mainstream ideas relationships and gender."

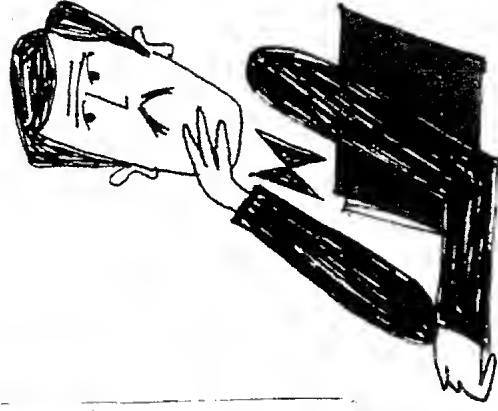
Consent is a mutual agreement to be engaging in a sexual activity.

with it, like Halloween or costume parties. I've identified as genderqueer for almost three years now, and it feels good to have people call me girly names and refer to me as "they." It's a process and there's a lot of stuff I'm still figuring out, but I'm on my way. I don't need to know where I'll end up.

There is an extremist tendency of so-called "feminism," populated by transphobic shithheads like Cathy Brennan who don't believe that you can change genders. They are often anti-sex worker as well, and have ousted people to their employers, which often results in their immediate firing. In the seventies (and still today), they accuse trans men of trying to attain male privilege by transitioning from a male to a female gender, instead of respecting those people and their gender self-determination. Folks will tell trans-women or genderqueer male-assigned people that they are attempting to flee privilege and are still really men. This is transphobic bullshit and people who say this don't know what the fuck they are talking about.



Wear a dress if you want to!



Ignore this asshole.

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I talk about rape first for a few reasons. One is that it is incredibly widespread:

A 1987 study found that a quarter of college males acknowledged using some measure of coercion to force sex with an unwilling partner.

The FBI says that 80-90% of rapes go unreported to police. This means that rape statistics that rely on police reports or legal records hugely under represent the prevalence of rape.

As many as 1 in 3 women will experience sexual assault during their lifetime.

This means we are likely to know someone who has been raped. We are also likely to know someone who has raped. Perhaps you fall into one of those categories. Regardless, it affects us all, whether we're aware of it or not. And I want to be clear: **rape is not the only kind of gender violence that matters.** We also need to fight against queer-bashings, economic violence against poor women, trans, and queer folks, police violence against queer people of color, imprisonment of trans folks, the criminalization of sex workers, street harassment, and so much more. Shit's fucked up. Let's get to work.

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These stickers are up all over Seattle!

We Are Living in a Rape Culture:

Yep, I said it. It sounds scary, right? One way to think of it is that in a rape culture, rape (or sexual violence in general) is normal - it isn't an exception, it is the rule. In other words, in a rape culture, rape is part of the everyday working of society. Rape culture is the infestation of all forms of culture and communication by overtly or covertly pro-rape messages, slang terms, ways of relating, customs around sexual relationships & dating, ideas about consent (or lack of such), and so

on.

But there are other ways to be a man:

You can cry in public. You can tell your male friends about your feelings. You can take care of kids. You can be a good listener. You can stop offering advice when no one asked you for it. You can take leadership from women, queer, and trans people. You can stop telling sexist jokes or laughing at them. You can learn how to prepare amazing meals for the people you care about. You can stop intimidating women in public with your comments, your eyes, your posture. You can build relationships built on mutual trust and empowerment. You can learn to dance. You can wear dangly earrings, or leggings, or skirts. You can see criticism as an opportunity to become a better person. You can accept the anger of women and still listen to what they have to say. Maybe you do some of these things already. Maybe you have a positive version of manhood that you already practice and think about, but if you don't, it's not too late to start!

It's also possible that you aren't a man. Just because everyone in your life has called you "he" and told you to be a man doesn't mean you have to be. You can be whoever you are, whether that's a woman, genderqueer, bi-gendered, or anything else that feels right for you. You can experiment with different names and pronouns (he, she, they, ze, hir, etc.) until you feel comfortable. It's okay!

I thought I was a man for a long time, until I started hanging out with trans people and queerdos (queer weirdos). Being around people who identified as genderqueer, or as femme men, or other gender identities or expressions I hadn't seen growing up, opened me up to the possibilities of who I could be. I was never comfortable with male gender expectations growing up - I didn't like speaking a lot in groups, or acting tough, or asking out people I was interested in. I enjoyed wearing dresses and "women's clothes" at times when I could get away

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1. Avoidance of that which is womanly or feminine.
2. Struggle for supremacy/dominance in relationships - men are naturally competitive and aggressive.
3. Repression of "feminine" emotions.

This is the role that most of us are expected to fill. We are pressured to fill this role in many ways. Some of those pressures are subtle, like an absence of queer or girly male role models. Some are unmistakable, such as threats of violence for stepping outside our assigned gender norms, also known as the "man box."

Quiz time: In the culture you were raised in, what are positive aspects of manhood? What are ones that you'd like to change, or leave behind?



Queer graffiti from Seattle!

One example of rape culture is romantic comedies, which often carry messages around sexual and romantic boundaries. Many romantic comedies feature a cis-male protagonist who is rejected by a woman. Part of the way he wins her back is by repeatedly violating the boundaries she has set to stay away from her, to not call her, etc. He does these things anyway, and after some persistence, she gives in and they fall in love. This is not how things work, but these stories teach men to ignore women's boundaries and to focus on their own emotional need to be accepted. In an alternate universe, romantic comedies would feature explicit consent practices, male characters empathizing with others, and lots of other cool stuff.

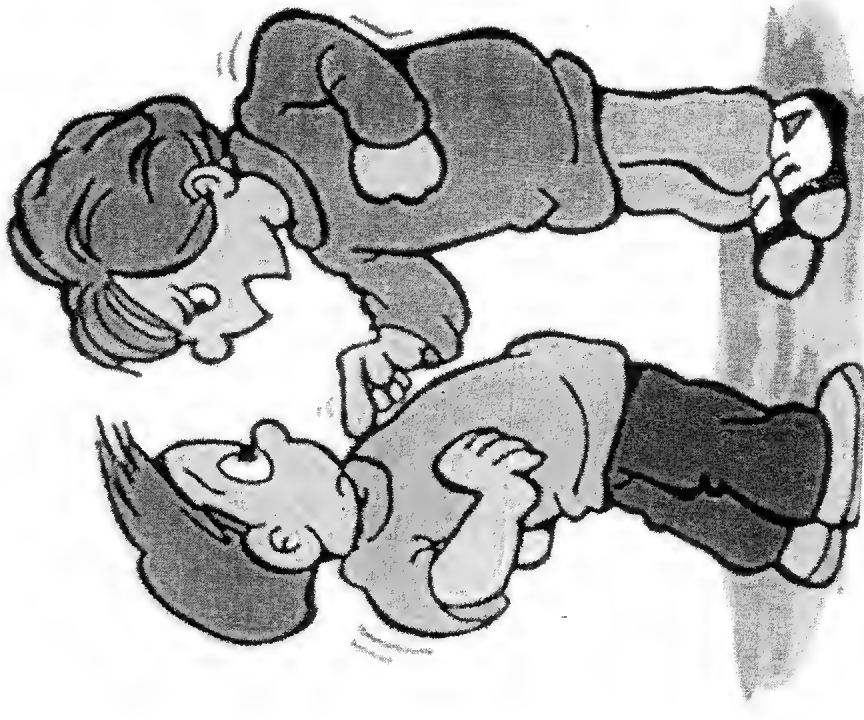
Another example of rape culture is the lack of consent education. We are not taught growing up that we are in charge of our own bodies and that we get to make all decisions about them. We are coerced to do things with our bodies we don't want to: kiss or hug relatives, sit on laps, etc. Often, as children, if we set boundaries about our bodies ("I don't want to hug you!") with adults, those boundaries were not respected or were intentionally violated. Our bodily autonomy was shown to be less important than adults' embarrassment or adherence to social customs. Of course, these messages vary by gender: people growing up as boys are less likely to have their bodies scrutinized, criticized or non-consensually touched than people growing up as girls.

One of my first experiences with consent education was when I went to a workshop called "Can I kiss you?" I was nineteen. I went in thinking it was cool to kiss someone when you wanted to. Asking for a kiss was something I hadn't really thought about. It seemed like an insecure thing to do or something. The speaker, a man in his thirties, won me over by talking about what happens when you ask for a kiss. He laid out two basic scenarios: 1) You ask and the other person says yes. They want to kiss you and think it's sweet that you asked. 2) You ask and the other person says no. They don't want to kiss you and you

just avoided making an ass of yourself and maybe getting slapped. But the main reason that consent is important is because it shows respect for the other person. I don't want other people making decisions about me or my body. Everyone, no matter what, deserves that power for themselves.

One hallmark of rape culture is victim-blaming. This often takes the form of blaming survivors for their rape, with statements like "you shouldn't have been out alone" or "you shouldn't have worn such revealing clothing." In addition to keeping their own sexuality under wraps, women are also frequently seen as being responsible for controlling cis-men's sexuality as well. Criticisms of the person who caused harm, like "no means no" or "what the fuck were you thinking?" are much less common. Similarly, what does advice concerning rape prevention look like? It's primarily a list of "don'ts" directed at women. However, since men commit nearly all rapes, men should be the primary target for rape prevention. It is those who rape that are responsible - not the survivor.

Robert Jensen says that rape culture doesn't mean that this culture openly promotes rape, but that it promotes a form of masculinity that encourages rape. (I have critiques of Jensen in a few pages, but I do think some of what he has written is valuable, so I am including it here.) Jensen is referring to the role of men as sexual aggressor and woman as sexual gatekeeper. These roles correspond to larger cultural themes of men as agents and women as passive, which encourage men to act on women as objects, for example, to rape them. Another way to say this is that women are seen as inherently "rapeable," especially if they are low- or no-income, of color, etc. These social roles also work to deny women agency and autonomy in everyday life, not just sexual circumstances: men are trained to disrespect women's agency and women are trained to not assert themselves.



"Don't be such a pussy!"

What Kind of Man Are You Going to Be?

First off, what does it mean to be a man? I know this is a terrible way to start an answer, but it depends. Gender roles are fluid (although increasingly homogenized in the globalizing world we live in), changing based on your race, culture of origin, citizenship status, ability, geographical location, socio-economic class, and so on. However, there are some patterns which we can talk about. Robert Jensen defines three traits that constitute a "real man":

Rethinking Your Dick:

For those of us who were socialized as male, talking about men and rape can bring up feelings of shame and guilt. Some people locate those feelings in shame around our bodies, specifically our genitals (or cock, or junk, or whatever you want to call it.) There is a tendency in feminism to locate the roots of rape, sexism, and patriarchy in the penis and “male”* bodies. This is a response to a culture that often equates sex and violence. For example, notorious asshole Tucker Max wrote in his autobiography that he wanted to “fuck her until she had multiple organ failure.”

It’s possible to internalize these feelings too. This is a great article that is too long to quote here, so just go to the link:

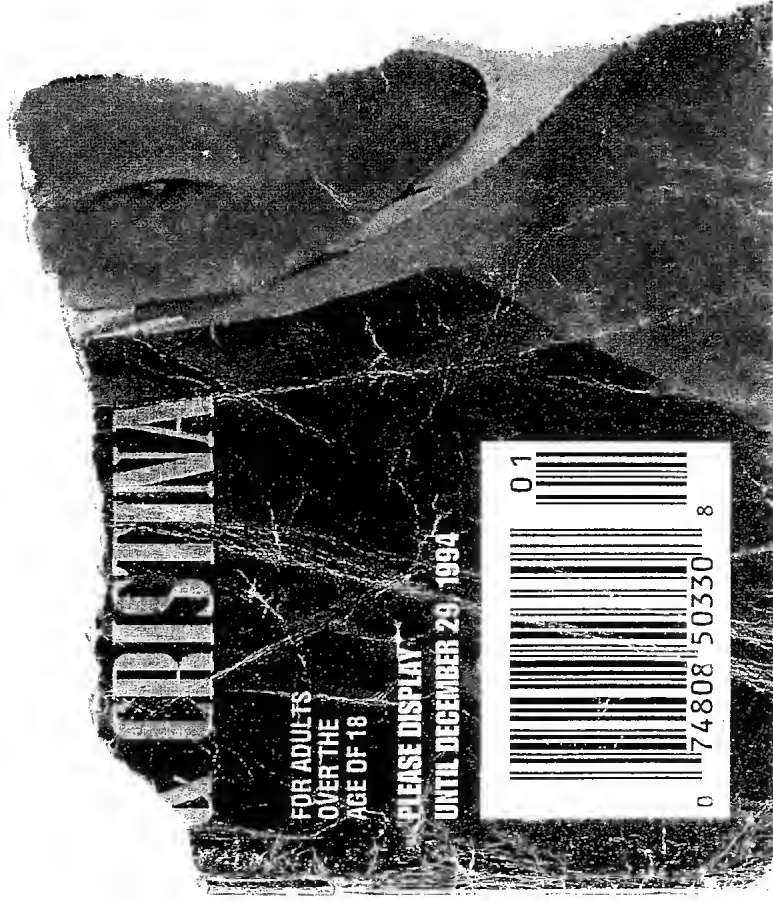
www.scarleteen.com/article/advice/is_intercourse_a_violence_or_a_violation

But the problem of rape doesn’t originate in our bodies or our organs. It’s a social problem: how we think about sex, how we think about other people, and how we see ourselves. The idea that cis-men are rapists because of their biology is wrong and a type of biological determinism, which is a fancy way of saying that our bodies determine our social roles and those can’t be changed. I say that’s bullshit. We can be whoever we want to be, although we can’t always change how people will see us. The important thing is to act in line with our values and be ready to accept the consequences of our actions.

* I use “male” in quotes here because when this kind of feminists say “men,” they are actually talking about cis-men, presumably ones who have their genitals intact and functional. Of course, there are many men who do not have external genitalia, some of whom are trans. The problem with thinking about gender and rape in a strictly biological way is that it invisibilizes the existence of trans and gender non-conforming people.

Part of rape culture is how cis-male sexuality is seen as uncontrollable. This is why women are blamed for rape – men “can’t help themselves.” We’ve all heard that before and it’s bullshit. There is a big difference between feeling entitled to someone’s body/sex, and feeling sexual desire for them. It is fine and great to think someone is sexy and want to have sex with them. It is not okay to think that you “deserve” to have sex with them, or that they should have sex with you, for any reason.





What About Porn?

I'm going to focus on two main sides of pornography here. First, I'm going to talk about the production of porn. I'm going to skip talking about distribution and cover consumption second.

For a long time, a certain set of feminists have attacked pornography as an inherently exploitative industry. They cite examples of young female performers who are taken advantage of, or raped on camera. There is no question that exploitation occurs within pornography. Performers get screwed out of their fair share of profits, workers on set and in post-production are not treated fairly, and some pornography is certainly produced under coercive conditions. Here's a quote from a sex worker about working conditions:

feminists often paint a rosy picture of sex work being inherently freeing, when this is certainly not always the case. The point is that those of us who are not sex workers need to listen to the voices of sex workers, especially those who are marginalized. For example, many queer youth who have fled abusive homes trade sex to survive on the streets. Speaking "for" people who are marginalized is paternalistic, condescending, and further strips them of agency. People who experience violence and marginalization know how to best solve their own problems - don't get in their way.

I'm not saying you shouldn't watch porn, or that you should only watch porn that is explicitly feminist, or anything like that. Like with movies, TV, or anything else, watch with a critical eye. Think about what turns you on and why. What are your values and when are you leaving them at the door? At what cost?



I've done many different kinds of sex work. I've been a cam girl, a porn performer, a professional sub, and a performer at a peep show (similar to a stripper). I've also been working in retail and food service simultaneously.

I get so frustrated at how I'm treated at work. It really gets to me. I find myself involuntarily crying once I get into my car to drive home. I hate how dehumanizing it is. People don't acknowledge me as a person. They think I'm less than them because of my job. Maybe they don't actively think that, but that's how they treat me. Oh, by the way, I'm talking about the food service job.

When I'm doing sex work I can refuse a customer. I can be rude to them if they are being rude to me. I don't have to apologize for their mistakes. I don't have to be sweet when they are being inappropriate. I negotiate my limits, and I only do what I feel comfortable doing. They don't get to order off the menu, I'm not going to bend over backwards for them.

I find it oppressive to work for minimum wage. I find it oppressive to act like the customer is always right. I find it dehumanizing to apologize for things that aren't my fault, like how much something costs or if you order something wrong and you want it remade the correct way. I find it dehumanizing to say "I'll flow are you?" and in response get "Yeah I just need a blah blah blah" and then leave a customer go back to their cell phone conversation. I hate being reduced to a cash register.

- hiddenew, reddit post

The point is that while pornography can be exploitative, so can all other work in a capitalist, sexist, racist, and homophobic economy. The problem isn't pornography itself, but instead the way almost all of us have to work to meet our basic needs in places we have very little agency or control. Stoya, the porn performer, has some excellent articles analyzing the porn industry with this framework - go look them up.

Pornography is made by real people, but most people interact with porn as consumers. In our current society, this largely happens through the internet. And just like any form of media, it contains certain messages about gender, sex, and power. There is a lot of different porn out there, from porn made for straight cis-men to queer porn that features exclusively transgender performers. I'm going to focus on porn made for straight cis-men, because it's the most widespread and because it contains common themes and messages.

Porn made for cis-men is focused on male pleasure. It does not depict the mutually satisfying sexual relationships that we should strive for in our lives. It depicts women's bodies as pieces: boobs, pussy, ass. Much porn is shot from the male actor's point of view and it perpetuates and reinforces mainstream gender roles. For example, men are typically the sexual aggressors, commanding and directing women to perform certain acts. This model is often followed in real life, where men are expected to know what to do, even if they don't know or aren't comfortable initiating sex, while women aren't supposed to voice their sexual desires or ask for what they want. And porn typically ends with the ubiquitous cumshot, evidence of male satisfaction, while women's orgasms are hardly mentioned or entirely incidental to the sex that is happening.

Pornography and sex work are often spoken of in simplistic terms to serve a larger agenda. For example, Robert Jensen, who has an anti-porn agenda, did a porn survey in which he included any porn that included spanking in the created category of "violent porn." Never mind whether the spanking was consensual, never mind that there are lots of people who enjoy spanking, never mind any critical analysis of how kink/BDSM sexual practices are marginalized and misnamed as abuse or violence. Jensen is comfortable speaking for porn performers, claiming they have experienced violence when it's possible they would say no such thing. On the other hand, pro-porn

Consent needs
Sober minds
(& bodies).

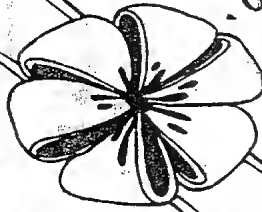


Apologies for the
heteronormativity -
I borrowed these
images from a
religious comic I
found on the bus.

© PWB 2009



Learn
to
grace-
fully
'accept'



"no" & appreciate
the gift of
someone being
honest with
you.

Remember:
Consent
is



**HOT AND
SEXY**

- HAVE FUN! -

HOW TO GET



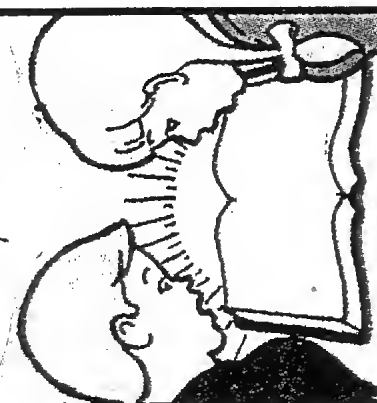
CONSENT

It can be
good to talk



about
boundaries,
desires, STI status,
& sexual history
before (as well
as during & after)
getting naked.

Define consent
for yourself.



Discuss your
definition(s) with
your partner(s).